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**THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1780 AND 1781**  
**IN**  
**THE SOUTHERN THEATRE OF THE AMERICAN**  
**REVOLUTIONARY WAR**

**An essay**  
**in support of the award**  
**of a PhD in history by publication**  
**at the University of Warwick**

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**This essay may be photocopied**

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## **Abstract**

The published work which forms the basis for consideration of my application is *The Cornwallis Papers: The Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Theatre of the American Revolutionary War* (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2010) ("the CP"). Consisting of six volumes, it comprises a corpus of work in which each volume deals with a distinct aspect of the southern campaigns. Volume I deals with the Charlestown campaign and the occupation of South Carolina and Georgia; volume II with the Battle of Camden and the autumn campaign; volume III with Cornwallis's refitment at Winnsborough; volume IV with the winter campaign in North Carolina and the march into Virginia; volume V with the Virginia campaign; and volume VI with the occupation, siege and capitulation of Yorktown and Gloucester.

This essay describes the overall place of the CP in the historiography of the Revolutionary War. It goes on to discuss examples of the original contributions to history made, on the one hand, by my commentary in the introductory chapters of the CP and, on the other, by my voluminous footnotes forming part of it. The essay concludes by drawing on my commentary to re-evaluate the strategy and tactics pursued by the British in the southern campaigns.

# PART 1

## Introduction

It was in 1975, when I was researching the American Revolution, that I came upon the Cornwallis Papers in the UK National Archives. I was much surprised that, despite the passage of almost 200 years and the vast extent of literature on the Revolution, no one had yet got around to editing and publishing this extraordinarily important primary material in so far as it related to the southern campaigns of 1780 and 1781 — material that in my estimation was crucial to evaluating the war in the south. I therefore decided to do the job myself.

A very small part of the material was already in the public domain. The few dispatches between Cornwallis, commanding in the south, and Clinton, the Commander-in-Chief, were, for example, published in part in the *London Gazette* and elsewhere during or shortly after the war. In the nineteenth century Charles Ross published brief extracts amounting to 121 pages, and other examples have appeared elsewhere, for instance in monographs or local histories such as those by Cashin and Robertson, Pancake, and Rogers.<sup>1</sup> Other recent works in which brief extracts appear

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ross (ed.), *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis* (London, 1859), vol. I; Edward J Cashin Jr and Heard Robertson, *Augusta and the American Revolution: Events in the Georgia Back Country 1773-1783* (Augusta: Richmond County Historical Society, 1975), pp. 41-8, 50 and 51; John S Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* (reprint of 1985 edition,

include, for example, biographies or partial ones such as those by Bass, Rankin, the Wickwires, and Willcox.<sup>2</sup> Yet, taken together, the extracts published before my own work comprised nothing more than a tiny fraction of the Cornwallis Papers relating to the southern campaigns. Nor, since their lodgement in the UK National Archives, was reliance placed on them in a variety of seminal works, whether, for example, they be, on the one hand, general accounts such as those by Fortescue, McCrady, Ward, Alden, and Mackesy or, on the other, biographies or monographs such as those by Robinson, Thayer, Treacy and Nelson.<sup>3</sup> The picture began to change on publication of the CP, as I shall later describe in this Part.

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Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), pp. 81-3, 89, 92-4, 190, and 191; George C Rogers Jr, *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 123-33, 136-38, and 142.

<sup>2</sup> Robert D Bass, *The Green Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson* (reprint of 1958 edition, Columbia: Sandlapper Press Inc, 1973), pp. 75, 76, 105-17, 121-25, 139, 140, 142-49, 151, 160, 167, 168, 175, 176, and 182; Hugh F Rankin, *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox* (New York: Thomas Y Crowell Company, 1973), pp. 49, 53-5, 65, 67, 73, 74, 78-80, 88, 90, 91, 110-12, 114-16, 121-25, 128, 130, 134, 140, 145, 190, 203, and 204; Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1970), pp. 132, 134, 138, 144, 147, 153, 154, 170, 171, 173-75, 178, and chs 8-12 and 14-16 *passim*; William B Willcox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1964), pp. 338, 355n, 378, and 382-84.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1902), vol. III; Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution* (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1901-2); Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution* (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1952); John R Alden, *The South in the Revolution 1763-1789* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957); Piers Mackesy, *The War for America 1775-1783* (reprint of 1964 edition, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Blackwell P Robinson, *William R Davie* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957); Theodore Thayer, *Nathanael Greene: Strategist of the American Revolution* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960); M F Treacy, *Prelude to Yorktown: The Southern Campaign of Nathanael Greene, 1780-1781* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963); Paul David Nelson, *General Horatio Gates: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

The work has two purposes: first, to provide a comprehensive and fully edited transcript of the papers; and second, in view of the numberless inaccuracies published about the war, various of which are addressed in the following Parts, to provide a commentary, whether in the introductory chapters or various footnotes, aimed at presenting the papers in an accurate, balanced and dispassionate way. 'Yet,' as stated in the preface to volume I, 'it is so very difficult to be accurate, balanced and dispassionate about a conflict in which political passions were so polarised and views so warped by them. Inevitably, it is the perspective from which the Papers are viewed which will to a degree determine whether the editor is seen to have squared the circle.'<sup>4</sup>

As far as the comprehensiveness of the transcript is concerned, it is described to some degree in the Editorial method at the beginning of volume I.<sup>5</sup> The omission of duplicates, triplicates, and quadruplicates of papers appearing in the CP requires no further explanation, whereas the omission of odd, extremely isolated papers is explained in greater detail in the footnote below.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise the papers relating to the southern campaigns are published in their entirety.

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<sup>4</sup> CP, vol. I, p. ix.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. xiii-xvi.

<sup>6</sup> Such isolated papers are stated to have been omitted on the ground that they do not relate to the southern campaigns or are too inconsequential. If we take volume I as an example, we find that, out of the mass of papers that may have appeared there, only fourteen have in fact been omitted on those grounds. Of them, seven do not relate to the war in the south, some being written before 1780, others

Important as the transcript is, it is not on it that my application for a PhD by publication preponderantly rests. Rather it is on the re-evaluations of certain crucial aspects of the war that the introductory chapters and various footnotes contain. Necessarily compressed, or else they would unbalance the work, they 'very briefly provide pointers,' as the preface explains. 'They also address certain important considerations that have long gone by default, together with others that are equally pertinent to placing the Papers in context.'<sup>7</sup>

Turning now to the historiography of the southern campaigns and to the CP's place in it, I shall address, first, the literature predating the publication of my work, being literature apparent to me at the time that I was preparing my draft; second, the literature postdating its publication; and finally, and most importantly, the ways in which the CP has contributed, and is likely to continue to do so, to writing about the southern campaigns. Given that the CP is almost exclusively concerned with the

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consisting of intercepted private letters of no relevance, and one a printed resolution of Congress relating to the New Hampshire Grants (later to become Vermont). The rest are also of little consequence to the conduct of the southern campaigns or to a reinterpretation of them: an intercepted letter requesting payment for two and a half bushels of salt; an intercepted list of Captain Archibald Murphey's company of Richmond District, Orange County NC, revolutionary militia; another intercepted list of a few NC recruits to the Continental line; a private letter to Cornwallis about the appointment of a physician; the draft of a warrant (never effected) to raise a Backcountry Provincial regiment; the draft of a letter, dated May 1780, from Cornwallis to Amherst offering his services elsewhere in the world, but overtaken by his appointment to command in the south; and lastly a short list of supplies appropriated by the army from one particular plantation. It is on the same grounds that extremely isolated papers listed in later volumes are omitted there.

<sup>7</sup> CP, vol. I, p. ix.



military aspects of the war, it is works of military history that loom particularly large.

As to military literature predating the publication of the CP, a most interesting overview of that by American writers, and almost unique in its day, was provided by Higginbotham in 1964, but sadly for my purposes its scope was too wide, extending to the war as a whole. Later it was amplified by him and supplemented, among others, by Carp, Coakley and Conn, Coffman, Gephart, Greene, Harrow, Karsten, Nelson, and Syrett.<sup>8</sup> What follows is a synthesis of their views, as partly modified by my own so as to centre more closely on literature about military operations in the south.

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<sup>8</sup> Don Higginbotham, 'American Historians and the Military History of the American Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, 70, No. 1 (October, 1964), pp. 18-34; Don Higginbotham, 'The Early American Way of War: Reconnaissance and Appraisal', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 44, No. 2 (April, 1987), pp. 230-73; E Wayne Carp, 'Early American Military History: A Review of Recent Work', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 94, No. 3 (July, 1986), pp. 259-84; Robert W Coakley and Stetson Conn, 'A Select Bibliography of Historical Literature on the Military History of the American Revolution' in their *The War of the American Revolution* (Washington DC, US Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 141-244; Edward M Coffman, 'The New American Military History', *Military Affairs*, 48, No. 1 (January, 1984), pp. 1-5; Ronald M Gephart, *Periodical Literature on the American Revolution: Historical Research and Changing Interpretations, 1895-1970* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1971); Jack P Greene, *Interpreting Early America: Historiographical Essays* (Charlottesville and London, 1996); Stefan M Harrow et al., *The American Revolution: A Selected Reading List* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1968); Peter Karsten, 'The "New" American Military History: A Map of the Territory, Explored and Unexplored', *American Quarterly*, 36, No. 3 (1984), pp. 389-418; Paul David Nelson, 'British Conduct of the American Revolutionary War: A Review of Interpretations', *The Journal of American History*, 65, No. 3 (December, 1978), pp. 623-53; David Syrett, 'The British Armed Forces in the American Revolutionary War: Publications, 1875-1998', *The Journal of Military History*, 63, No. 1 (January, 1999), pp. 147-64.

There have been three distinct periods into which American historiography of the war in the south, and indeed of the war as a whole, may be divided: the first, extending roughly to the end of the nineteenth century, was marked by rampant American nationalism, leading the reading public to seek its heroes in the war and historians to portray it uncritically in black and white terms; the second, covering the four decades till the close of the Second World War, was a phase in which both the public at large and academic historians lost much of their interest in revolutionary warfare; and the third, beginning about 1945, has seen the re-entry of the military theme into the mainstream of revolutionary studies. Although, beginning in the nineteenth century, much primary material began to be published, some in book form, but preponderantly in American historical journals, the fact is that American histories, biographies, monographs and articles of that era were so materially unbalanced that none is addressed in this essay, being superseded to a marked degree by those published since 1945. As regards the period from the turn of the century till then, the publication of primary material continued but otherwise writing about the military history of the war in the south was sparse, though Gregorie, an academic historian, published a critically acclaimed biography of Sumter, and Williams, a gifted non-professional, produced two informative works on the overmountain settlers and their involvement in the Battle of King's

Mountain.<sup>9</sup> American historians were led by the Second World War to begin a vast outpouring of material on the military history of the Revolutionary War, a phenomenon that shows no signs of abating. Until then the liberal academic's prejudice against war, and by extension those who study it, had prevailed for almost half a century, but now it was recognised that the investigation of warfare could not be ignored.<sup>10</sup> No longer, as distinct from the nineteenth century, were works about the Revolutionary War to be characterised by 'drum and bugle' history — the depiction of battles and actions, the relation of heroic conduct, and generally the glorification of the martial spirit, but were centred, though by no means solely, on campaigns, strategy, tactics, logistics, and weapons. And with the advent of guerrilla wars in Algeria, Angola, Cuba, Indochina, Kenya, Malaya and Vietnam there came recognition in the 1970s of the important contribution to the war effort made by revolutionary partisans, whether collectively, as in the militia, or as individuals. At the same time a 'new military history' evolved. As Karsten states, it exhibited 'a full-fledged concern with the *rest* of military history — that is, a fascination with the recruitment, training, and socialization of personnel, combat motivation, the effect of service and war on the individual soldier, the veteran, the

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<sup>9</sup> Anne King Gregorie, *Thomas Sumter* (Columbia SC: R L Bryan Co, 1931); Samuel Cole Williams, *Dawn of Tennessee Valley and Tennessee History* (Johnson City, Tenn: The Watauga Press, 1937) and *Tennessee during the Revolutionary War* (reprint of 1944 edition, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974).

<sup>10</sup> For a brief discussion of academic attitudes toward military history, see E Wayne Carp, 'The Problem of National Defense in the Early Republic', in Jack P Greene (ed.), *The American Revolution: its Character and Limits* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), pp. 14-50.

internal dynamics of military institutions, inter- and intra-service tensions, civil-military relations, and the relationship between military systems and the greater society.'<sup>11</sup> All in all, it would be invidious in this introduction to single out specific examples of this vast output when so much is relevant to military operations in the south. Rather I shall leave it to the later Parts of this essay to place my original contributions to the historiography of the war not only within the context of what appears to me the seminal literature since 1945 but also within the wider context of earlier work.

When compared with works by American writers on the southern campaigns or by revolutionary participants in them, those emanating from British, loyalist or Hessian sources prior to the CP's publication are few indeed. We have, for example, works by Tarleton, MacKenzie, Hanger, Simcoe and Stedman in the eighteenth century, by Lamb, Gray, Allaire and Raymond in the nineteenth, and by Fortescue, Chesney, Uhlendorf, Robson, Wright, Mackesy, Clinton, Ewald and Davies in the twentieth, but overall the material written by British historians is sparse, perhaps reflecting a disinclination on their part to write about a war that the British had lost.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Karsten, 'The "New" American Military History'. p. 389.

<sup>12</sup> Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London, 1787); Roderick MacKenzie, *Strictures on Lt Col Tarleton's History of the Campaigns of*

The CP was published in mid 2010 and continues in print. Not publicised beforehand, or widely afterwards, it took some time for it to become broadly disseminated among historians but is now so. By the close of 2012 works of a general nature had begun to make use of it, as had monographs, biographies, and articles in historical journals — a trend that has continued.<sup>13</sup> No serious work about

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1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America (London, 1787); The Hon George Hanger, *An Address to the Army in reply to Strictures of Roderick M'Kenzie (late Lieutenant in the 71st Regiment) on Tarleton's History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781* (London, 1789); John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers from the end of the year 1777 to the conclusion of the late American War* (Exeter, 1787); Charles Stedman, *History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War* (London, 1792); Roger Lamb, *An Original and Authentic Journal of Occurrences During the Late American War from its Commencement to the Year 1783* (Dublin, 1809) and *Memoir of His Own Life* (Dublin, 1811); Robert Gray, 'Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina', *North Carolina University Magazine*, 8, No. 4 (November, 1858), pp. 145-60, republished in *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 11 (July, 1910), pp. 139-59; Anthony Allaire, 'Diary', Appendix to Lyman C Draper, *King's Mountain and its Heroes* (Cincinnati, 1881); W O Raymond, 'Roll of Officers of the British American or Loyalist Corps', *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, 2 (1899); Fortescue, *History*; E A Jones (ed.), 'Journal of Alexander Chesney, A South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After', *Ohio State University Bulletin*, 26, No. 4 (1921); Bernhard A Uhlendorf (trans. and ed.), *The Siege of Charleston...: Diaries and Letters of Hessian Officers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938); Eric Robson, *The American Revolution in its Political and Military Aspects 1763-1783* (reprint of 1955 edition, New York: W W Norton & Co Inc, 1966); Esmond Wright, *Fabric of Freedom 1763-1800* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1965); Mackesy, *The War for America*; William B Willcox (ed.), *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of His Campaigns 1775-1782* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954); Joseph P Tustin (trans. and ed.), *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979); K G Davies (ed.), *Documents of the American Revolution 1770-1783*, vols. XVIII and XX (Dublin: Irish Academic Press Ltd, 1978-9).

<sup>13</sup> For example Daniel T Canfield, 'The Futility of Force and the Preservation of Power: British Strategic Failure in America, 1780-83', *Parameters* (US Army War College Quarterly), 42, No. 3 (Autumn, 2012); Carl P Borick, *Relieve us of this Burthen: American Prisoners of War in the Revolutionary South, 1780-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012); William T Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary: James Williams 1740-1780* (Lugoff SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press, 2012); Llewellyn M Toulmin, 'Backcountry Warrior: Brig. Gen. Andrew Williamson', *Journal of Backcountry Studies*, 7, Nos 1 and 2 (Spring and Fall, 2012); Paul E Kopperman, 'The Medical Dimension in Cornwallis's Army, 1780-1781', *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 89, No. 4 (October 2012); C L Bragg, *Crescent Moon over Carolina: William Moultrie and American Liberty* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013); Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Command during the Revolutionary War and the Preservation of the Empire* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013); John C Parker Jr, *Parker's Guide to the Revolutionary War in South Carolina*, 2nd ed.

the war in the south can fail to take into account the CP if it deals with British strategy, tactics, the British response from their perspective to the nature of the conflict and the problems faced by them, the royal militia, the administration of South Carolina outside Charlestown, the policies pursued and the reasons for them, and various other matters on which the contents of the CP throw light.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless the transcripts, emanating, as they do, almost entirely from British or British American officers and officials, inevitably view, through the prism of their own polarised perspectives, policies, events, and the actors in them. While we can, for example, accept at face value Cornwallis's contention at Charlotte that the county of Mecklenburg was the most rebellious that he had met with in America, we may look askance at Turnbull's unbalanced description of inveterate Scotch-Irish revolutionaries and the way in which he recommended that they be treated if captured: 'Those Mecklenburgh, Roan, and my friends the Irish above are perhaps the greatest skum of the Creation. English lenity is thrown away when there is not virtue to meet it half way. If some of them could be caught who have submitted

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(West Conshohocken PA: Infinity Publishing, 2013); Daniel Murphy, *William Washington, American Light Dragoon: A Continental Cavalry Leader in the War of Independence* (Yardley PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014); Daniel T Canfield, *Understanding British Strategic Failure in America: 1780-1783* (Charleston SC: Createspace, 2014); Wayne Lynch, 'The Making of a Loyalist', *Journal of the American Revolution* (January 2014); idem., 'Elijah Clarke and the Georgia Refugees fight British Domination' (ibid., September 2014); Jim Picuch, 'Richard Pearis and the Mobilization of South Carolina's Backcountry Loyalists' (ibid., October 2014); Wayne Lynch, 'Moses Kirkland and the Southern Strategy', *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* (April 2015); William Thomas Sherman, *Calendar and Record of the Revolutionary War in the South: 1780-1781*, 10th ed. (Seattle WA: Gun Jones Publishing, 2015); John R Maas, *The Road to Yorktown* (Charleston SC: The History Press, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Kopperman, 'The Medical Dimension'.

and run off and join'd the rebels, an example on the spot of immediate death and confiscation of property might perhaps make them submit.' So, when we use the transcripts to illuminate the past, we need, inevitably, to think about bias in the sources, recognising that they are not transparent or innocent documents but are written in particular circumstances and for particular audiences. 'Reading against the grain' is therefore at times essential, though generally, when we interpret the war, we need, as ever, to view it not just through the prism of the present but also through that of the past.<sup>15</sup>

I now turn to the overall place of the CP in the historiography of the southern campaigns. As previously stated, it comprises both transcripts and a commentary on various aspects of the war in the south. As to the former, it is a continuation not only of works by Ross, Stevens, and Davies but, more importantly, of the recently published Greene Papers, being those of the Continental general opposed to Cornwallis in late 1780 and early 1781.<sup>16</sup> As such, the transcripts provide not only the views and decisions of Cornwallis and Clinton but also those of the Commandant of Charlestown and of subordinate officers in command of posts or regiments. Besides highlighting the problems faced by the British and the measures

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<sup>15</sup> CP, vol. I, p. 364, and vol. II, p. 106; John H Arnold, *History* (Oxford University Press, 2000), *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> Ross (ed.), *Cornwallis Correspondence*; Benjamin Franklin Stevens (ed.), *The Campaign in Virginia...: the Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy*, 2 vols. (London, 1887-88); Davies (ed.), *Documents*; Richard K Showman, Dennis M Conrad, Roger N Parks, et al. (eds), *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vols VI to IX (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991-97).

taken to resolve them, they include much other information, for example on logistics and the care of the sick or wounded. All in all, they provide a far more rounded and informed picture than one emanating from the British high command alone. As regards the commentary, it is preponderantly concerned with matters other than those that the 'new military history' addresses and on which the CP throws only marginal light.<sup>17</sup> Ipso facto, the commentary adopts a more traditional approach, forming conclusions on the nature and events of the war and the actors in it.

The next Part discusses examples of the original contributions to history made, on the one hand, by my commentary in the introductory chapters of the CP and, on the other, by my footnotes forming part of it. I shall seek to place most matters there in the context of the historiography relating to them, having described in this introduction the overall place of the CP in the historiography of the war. This essay concludes by addressing the big questions and the answers to them given in, or inferable from, my commentary. For example, was the war in the south winnable by the British and was the strategy sound? If not, why not, but if so, what were the critical mistakes that led to disaster?

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<sup>17</sup> See, *supra*, pp. 9-10.



## PART 2

### Discussion of my commentary

#### *Prefatory remarks*

Wide-ranging and to some degree disparate as they are, my original contributions to the history of the southern campaigns are compartmentalised in part under the sub-headings set out below. Necessarily compressed, the contributions crystallise my reassessment of the matters or persons addressed.

As ever, when it comes to the historiography of the war in the south, it is a question of separating those works that add to our understanding of it from the many that do not. On Greene alone five works were published between 1960 and 1972, and since then the rate of publication has increased, particularly in recent years.<sup>18</sup> Yet apart from Thayer's and Treacy's scholarly studies on the one hand, Showman's edition of Greene's own papers on the other, and the thought-provoking work edited by Massey and Piecuch, none adds, at least for the military historian, to a better understanding of Greene's character, strategy and tactics. Keeping track of works on Greene is of course a mere microcosm of the picture as a whole. As

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<sup>18</sup> Thayer, *Greene*; Treacy, *Prelude to Yorktown*; Clifford L Alderman, *Retreat to Victory: The Life of Nathanael Greene* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co, 1967); Ralph Edgar Bailey, *Guns over the Carolinas: The Story of Nathanael Greene* (New York: William Morrow, 1967); Elswyth Thane, *The Fighting Quaker: Nathanael Greene* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1972); Showman et al. (eds), *Greene Papers*; Gregory D Massey and Jim Piecuch (eds), *General Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution in the South* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2012). The many recent biographies of Greene include Lee Patrick Anderson, *Forgotten Patriot: The Life and Times of Major-General Nathanael Greene* (Boca Raton FL: Universal Publishers, 2002); Gerald M Carbone, *Nathanael Greene: A Biography of the American Revolution* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Terry Golway, *Washington's General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 2005); Steven E Siry, *Greene: Revolutionary General* (Lincoln, Nebr: Potomac Books, 2007); Spencer C Tucker, *Rise and Fight Again: The Life of Nathanael Greene* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009).

Cogliano has stated, 'The present literature on the American Revolution is so vast that it would be impossible to digest it in a lifetime... more works pour off the presses monthly.'<sup>19</sup> There, historiographically, lies the problem.

Overall, I remain of opinion that militarily the broad picture of the war has not markedly altered since the 1970s, but almost all interpretive works are written from an American perspective that does not always coincide with my aim to provide an accurate, balanced and dispassionate commentary on the war. Ipso facto, I have preferred to base my own conclusions mostly on primary and secondary material rather than on the reworking or interpretation of it in tertiary form, even though in many respects there is a wide measure of agreement between the latter and myself.<sup>20</sup>

It remains for me here to add a few remarks on the Backcountry of South Carolina and Georgia, to which the majority of papers in the CP relate. On extensively reading the literature on the southern campaigns I was struck by the fact that nowhere did I find a comprehensive sketch of this vast region or of the life and character of its inhabitants. Scattered items of information were to be found, but nowhere were they collated into an overall picture. Yet in my opinion such a picture was essential if one was to place the CP in context and fully understand how Backcountry society and the character of its inhabitants impacted on the revolutionaries' barbarous conduct of the war. I have therefore filled the gap.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Francis D Cogliano, *Revolutionary America 1763-1815: A political history* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> I use "secondary" to describe material emanating from interviews or conversations with persons who had taken part in, or lived through, the war. By "tertiary" I mean material that is neither primary nor secondary and, to the extent that it relies on other tertiary material, needs to be treated with a measure of caution.

<sup>21</sup> CP, vol. I, pp. 32-5, the sources for which are cited, *inter alia*, on pp. 41-2. Among those who first alerted me to the nature of the frontier was Mason Locke Weems, but aware that he was a populariser who had partly fabricated a biography of Marion, I concluded that I could not rely on him. I

## *Commentary on events*

### *Clinton's proclamation of 3 June 1780*

This proclamation, which cancelled the paroles of South Carolinians not in the military line, has been oft and uniformly interpreted as forcing the disaffected to choose between supporting the Crown or taking up arms against it. Many, so it is asserted, were led by the proclamation to take the latter course, thus initiating the insurrection. I, on the other hand, indicate that the damage was in fact done, not by the proclamation, but rather by the gloss placed on it by the few militant revolutionaries, who interpreted it in a misleading and persuasive way that has gained uncritical acceptance down the years. I conclude by setting out what in my estimation were the real factors that led many to take up arms.<sup>22</sup>

### *The action at the Waxhaws, 29 May 1780*

No matter Piecuch's contention that no deliberate massacre took place at the Waxhaws, the vast disparity in the number of casualties alone suggests that a disreputable bloodbath occurred — a fact that Tarleton himself, in so many words, admits, as does Stedman, who was serving with Cornwallis. Various American historians have maintained, ever since the close of the war, that Tarleton was responsible for ordering the slaughter, but was he, and did the action instigate, as is

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accordingly turned to other sources, for example O'Neill, Chapman and Bridenbaugh, for their accounts of drunkenness beyond the fall line, although their wider comments on life there were also extremely valuable. As to drunkenness, see John Belton O'Neill and John Abney Chapman, *The Annals of Newberry, Historical, Biographical, and Anecdotal* (Newberry SC, 1892), pp. 288, 498-9, 512, 526, 553-4, 558; and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths & Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (reprint of 1952 edition, New York: Atheneum, 1976), pp. 142, 177-8.

<sup>22</sup> CP, vol. I, p. 40; Cornwallis's general plan for regulating South Carolina and his dispatch of 30 June 1780 to Clinton support my own interpretation, *ibid.*, pp. 123-24 and 160-61.

generally asserted, the merciless barbarity with which the war was waged by the revolutionary irregulars and state troops?<sup>23</sup> In answering these questions I have relied in part on an eyewitness account by the revolutionary officer who was directly involved in the incident that led to the bloodbath.<sup>24</sup> It was in fact the dishonouring of the flag of truce and the fear that Tarleton had been killed that caused his men to run amok. Tarleton, pinioned beneath his horse, was, as he implies, in no position easily to restrain them. As to the effect of the action on the later behaviour of the enemy, I conclude that it served simply as an excuse. 'After a review of the papers in volume I and subsequent volumes,' says Borick, 'it is hard to disagree.'<sup>25</sup>

### *The royal militia*

The problem of finding suitable field officers and the fragility of the royal militia in the summer of 1780 I summarise, basing myself on evidence coming to light in the CP. Whether we begin with Tarleton or continue with works down to

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<sup>23</sup> Jim Piecuch, *The Blood Be Upon Your Head: Tarleton and the Myth of Buford's Massacre* (Lugoff SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press, 2010), pp. 27-40; Tarleton, *Campaigns*, p. 31; Stedman, *History*, ii, pp. 193, 325. For American accounts down the years of Tarleton's involvement see, for example, David Ramsay, *The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina from a British Province to an Independent State*, 2 vols. (Trenton, 1785), ii, pp. 109-10; William Dobein James, *A Sketch of the Life of Brig. Gen. Francis Marion and A History of His Brigade* (Charleston, 1821), Appendix, pp. 1-7; Joseph Johnson, *Traditions and Reminiscences chiefly of the American Revolution in the South* (Charleston, 1851), p. 311; McCrady, *History*, i, pp. 519, 522; Bass, *Green Dragoon*, pp. 80-3; Russell F Weigley, *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaign of 1780-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 7; Charles Bracelen Flood, *Rise and Fight Again: Perilous Times along the Road to Independence* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co, 1976), pp. 259-61; Henry Lumkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South* (St Paul, Minn: Paragon House, 1981), p. 50; J Tracy Power, "'The Virtue of Humanity Was Totally Forgot': Buford's Massacre, May 29, 1780", *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 93, No. 1 (January 1992), pp. 5-14; John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas* (Hoboken NJ: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 1997), pp. 84-5; David K Wilson, *The Southern Strategy: Britain's Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775-1780* (reprint of 2005 edition, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), p. 259.

<sup>24</sup> CP, vol. I, p. 35; Alexander Garden, *Anecdotes of the American Revolution (Second Series)* (Charleston, 1828), pp. 126-28.

<sup>25</sup> Carl P Borick, Review, *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 112, Nos 1-2 (January-April 2011), p. 89.

the present day, we find that, while various authors relate the defection of Mills' and Floyd's regiments, none provides as complete a picture of the royal militia at this time as I do.<sup>26</sup>

### *What if the Battle of Camden had been lost?*

Cornwallis's victory was so comprehensive that historians have been seemingly distracted into believing that it was inevitable. None — at least of those that I have read — has questioned Cornwallis's assertion that there was 'little to lose by a defeat'. I on the contrary maintain that there was everything to lose — the war, in fact, itself.<sup>27</sup> No victory is inevitable. However propitious the prospects of success, chance inevitably plays its part in battles and can be the determining factor.

### *The autumn campaign*

Cornwallis's dispatches at this time to Germain and Clinton have for the most part been long in the public domain and have been relied on by historians to provide a broad outline of his advance to Charlotte. I supplement those accounts with more detailed information about the problems facing him before his march, the sickliness of his troops, and the coming up of his reinforcements. As regards his plan of campaign, I quote an unpublished letter that he wrote to Wemyss and go on to describe how, overstretched as he was, disaster struck at Charlotte. Basing myself here and elsewhere on the CP, I then provide a critique of the risks he was running in embarking on the campaign and continue by questioning why the campaign ever took place. I conclude by suggesting that he struck the wrong balance between

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<sup>26</sup> CP, vol. I, pp. 40, 151; Tarleton, *Campaigns*, pp. 93, 98.

<sup>27</sup> CP, vol. II, pp. 4, 12.

political and military considerations and acted prematurely. In a nutshell, and not for the only time, his strategic judgement was in my opinion at fault.<sup>28</sup> Wherever the historiography of the southern campaigns leads us, whether to early, later or recent works by British or American writers, we find neither the breadth of information about the campaign that I provide nor anything approaching my comprehensive analysis of the attendant risks and of the underlying strategy.<sup>29</sup>

### *Wemyss' and Moncrief's expeditions to the east of the Wateree and Santee*

Relying on the CP, I relate for the first time the composition of Wemyss' detachment and contradict accounts percolating down to the present day that he conducted a wholesale hanging spree. Actually only one man was executed. What in reality has come down to us is a distortion of the facts, a distortion arising in the same way as with Dunlap, a British American officer in Ferguson's corps.<sup>30</sup> History has remained virtually silent about Moncrief's foray. Swisher summarises it very inaccurately in one brief sentence, but elsewhere we search almost in vain for references to it.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-6, 28-30, 32.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Tarleton, *Campaigns*, pp. 158-61, 166; Stedman, *History*, ii, pp. 215-18; Fortescue, *History*, pp. 321-22, 324; McCrady, *History*, i, pp. 741, 806-08; Robson, *American Revolution*, pp. 136-37; Howard H Peckham, *The War for Independence: A Military History* (reprint of 1958 edition, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 147, 149; Mackesy, *The War for America*, pp. 344-45; Hugh F Rankin (ed.), *The American Revolution* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964), pp. 256-57; Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1971), p. 363; Ira D Gruber, 'Britain's Southern Strategy', in W Robert Higgins (ed.), *The Revolutionary War in the South: Power, Conflict, and Leadership* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1979), pp. 229-30; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, pp. 112, 117-18, 120-21; Dan L Morrill, *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution* (Mount Pleasant SC: The Nautical & Aviation Pub Co of America, 1993), pp. 97-8; Buchanan, *Road to Guilford*, pp. 186-88.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Buchanan, *supra*, p. 185. CP, vol. II, p. 26; as to Dunlap, see, *infra*, p. 35-6.

<sup>31</sup> CP, *ibid*; James K Swisher, *The Revolutionary War in the Southern Back Country* (Gretna LA: Pelican Publishing Co, 2012), p. 200.

I extensively explain, in a way that has never surfaced before, why the two forays were justified. In doing so I quote Cornwallis on the threat to the communication between the upper army and Charlestown posed by the virulently disaffected country east of the Wateree and Santee. I then conclude, like Cornwallis, that lenity and conciliation stood no chance in resolving the problem, the only option being the policy of deterrence adopted by him.<sup>32</sup>

*Cornwallis's refitment at Winnsborough and the start of the winter campaign*

An essay of this prescribed length entails my being necessarily brief and necessarily selective of my original contributions to history. So, suffice it for me to notice here my sequential description of the defensive state of South Carolina and Georgia at this time — a much more extensive and rounded description than is found elsewhere, together with one example below of minor but revealing ways in which I have also contributed.<sup>33</sup>

Works about the war are littered with references to troop numbers, whether to rank and file or not, and betray some confusion between the two. On analysing British and British American regimental returns I discovered that the proportion of officers, serjeants and drummers was consistently 17.5% of all ranks. I apply this factor to calculating Tarleton's total force at the Battle of Cowpens and Cornwallis's remaining force for the winter campaign, which had previously been uncertain.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> CP, vol. II, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> CP, vol. III, pp. 4-9.

<sup>34</sup> If, for example, we take Tarleton's total force at Cowpens, I accurately calculate it as 1,150 men. Whereas the likes of Higginbotham, Waring and Ward agree with me, others such as Hunter, Schenck and Treacy put the figure as low as 850. By contrast Bass, Carrington, Fortescue, Graham and the Wickwires are among those who specify a figure of 1,000 (Ward, *The War*, ii, p. 755; Treacy, *Prelude to Yorktown*, p. 111; Bass, *Green Dragoon*, pp. 143, 147, 159; Fortescue, *History*, p. 359; the Wickwires,

That the factor is accurate is borne out by the correlation of the two returns, one for rank and file, and the other for all ranks, that capitulated at Yorktown.<sup>35</sup>

### *The rest of the winter campaign*

Partly for the reason I have given, and partly to make way for wider comments on other matters, I perforce restrict myself to simply noticing my contributions to the history of the campaign, being contributions not preceded elsewhere, namely my evaluation of the wider motives propelling Cornwallis to continue with the campaign after Cowpens; my evaluation of the strategy that he would most probably have pursued if the defeat at Cowpens had not occurred; and my correlation, using the factor of 17.5%, of the conflicting returns of the troops that he brought to the battle at Guilford.<sup>36</sup>

### *A central enigma of the southern campaigns resolved*

Prior to the publication of the CP Cornwallis's decision to forsake South Carolina and Georgia and march from Wilmington into Virginia had puzzled historians for almost 230 years. None had come close to determining his real motives. Almost all, like Alden, Gruber, Lumkin, Mackesy, Peckham and Tonsetic, had simply accepted the decision at face value or as no more than a strategic

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Cornwallis, p. 256; Alice N Waring, *The Fighting Elder: Andrew Pickens (1739-1817)* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), p. 47; Henry B Carrington, *Battles of the American Revolution, 1775-1781*, (5th edition, New York, 1888), p. 542; Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 130; Cyrus Lee Hunter, *Sketches of Western North Carolina... illustrating principally the Revolutionary Period* (Raleigh NC, 1877), p. 333; David Schenck, *North Carolina 1780-81* (Raleigh NC, 1889), p. 219; James Graham, *The Life of General Daniel Morgan* (New York, 1856), pp. 277-78).

<sup>35</sup> CP, vol. III, pp. 11-2, and vol. VI, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> CP, vol. IV, pp. 3, 5, 8.



mistake, while a few, like Pancake and Rankin, had attempted to justify it on spurious grounds such as assuring the safety of the Carolinas by disrupting Greene's supplies and reinforcements or as making the Chesapeake the main focus of the war.<sup>37</sup>

In what Borick has described as among my 'most groundbreaking and insightful analysis' I have sought to disprove, by drawing on the CP alone, Cornwallis's contention that it was impracticable for him to return overland to South Carolina. I have gone on to analyse his stated reasons for not moving that way and concluded that they do not make sense. This being so, I have advanced what in my estimation were most likely the real reasons propelling him to take the absurd and fateful decision that he did, besides explaining why the whole affair evinced 'at best a serious flaw in his character and at worst a gross dereliction of duty'. In short, Cornwallis was temperamentally ill at ease with defensive warfare, a prospect facing him if he returned to South Carolina and Georgia; being a humane, cultivated man, he was sickened by the murderous barbarity with which the war was waged there by the revolutionary irregulars and state troops; he had no stomach for the necessarily disagreeable measures involved in suppressing the rebellion there; he was suffering from the mental and physical fatigue of commanding a year's hard and solid campaigning; and always keen to act offensively, he simply opted for the more congenial alternative of doing so in Virginia, well away from the distasteful nature of the war farther south — an alternative, incidentally, which pricked his

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<sup>37</sup> John R Alden, *The American Revolution 1775-1783* (reprint of 1954 edition, New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 238; idem, *A History of the American Revolution* (London: Macdonald and Co, 1969), p. 465; Gruber, *Southern Strategy*, p. 235; Lumkin, *Savannah to Yorktown*, p. 223; Mackesy, *The War for America*, pp. 407-08; Peckham, *The War*, p. 177; Robert L Tonsetic, *1781: The Decisive Year of the Revolutionary War* (Hovertown PA: Casemate, 2013), pp. 105-06; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, pp. 189-90; Hugh F Rankin, 'Charles Lord Cornwallis: Study in Frustration', in George Athan Billias (ed.), *George Washington's Generals and Opponents: Their Exploits and Leadership* (Boston MA: Da Capo Press, 1994), vol. II, p. 213.

pride less than the perceived ignominy of conducting a defensive war to the southward after another unsuccessful campaign. To Tarleton too I apportion part of the blame for Cornwallis's decision to march north.<sup>38</sup>

### *Yorktown*

If we begin with Hanger, who took part in Clinton's failed attempt to relieve Cornwallis, and then turn to historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whose interpretations have carried great weight, we find a uniformity of view that the single or prime cause of the capitulation was the Royal Navy's losing command of North American waters.

Discounting the defeats at King's Mountain and Cowpens as 'only partial misfortunes', Hanger continues, 'I will be so bold as to assert that these misfortunes did not in any degree contribute to the loss of America, nor could many such misfortunes have produced that calamity. Our ruin was completed by permitting *a superior French fleet* to ride triumphant on the American seas the autumn of 1781. That, and that only, ruined our cause in America and disgracefully put an end to the war. There the nail was clinched!'<sup>39</sup> Among those agreeing with Hanger are Johnston, Carrington, and more recently Mackesy, Wallace and Ward. Others such as Adams and Robson concede that lost superiority at sea was the prime cause of the disaster but do not elaborate as to the rest. Willcox and Higginbotham are among

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<sup>38</sup> Borick, Review, p. 89; CP, vol. IV, pp. 101-03.

<sup>39</sup> Hanger, *An Address*, pp. 127-28.

those who mention that British military strategy was also at fault, but again without elaboration.<sup>40</sup>

While accepting that French naval superiority was the immediate cause of the defeat, I myself aver — unlike the historians I cite — that it was due preponderantly to a series of chance circumstances, a number of which, if they had been otherwise, would not have placed Cornwallis at Yorktown or would have averted his capitulation in other ways.<sup>41</sup> As to the dilatoriness of the Royal Navy in repairing its fleet, I state, 'There is reason to suspect that the repairs to the ships damaged in the Battle of the Chesapeake Capes may not have been progressed as rapidly and as urgently as the critical situation demanded. Had they been completed a week sooner, Cornwallis might well have been saved.'<sup>42</sup> In coming to these conclusions I had in mind comments made in his diary by Mackenzie, one of Clinton's aides-de-camp. On 1 October he remarks, 'It appears very doubtful that the Navy will after all attempt or undertake any thing towards the relief of Lord Cornwallis.' The captains 'appear more ready to censure the conduct of others than to refit their own ships. Several of the captains spend more of their time on shore than they do on board and appear as unconcerned about the matter as if they commanded guard ships at Portsmouth.' On 16 October he continues, 'If the Navy are not a little more

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<sup>40</sup> Henry P Johnston, *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis 1781* (reprint of 1881 edition, Williamstown MA: Corner House Publishers, 1975), p. 97; Carrington, *Battles*, p. 654; Piers Mackesy, 'British Strategy in the War of American Independence', *Yale Review*, 52 (Summer 1963), pp. 556-57; idem, *Could the British have won the War of Independence?* (Worcester MA: Clark University Press, 1976), p. 25; Willard M Wallace, *Appeal to Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1951), p. 254; Ward, *The War*, p. 885; Randolph G Adams, 'A View of Cornwallis's Surrender at Yorktown', *The American Historical Review*, 37, No. 1 (October 1931), p. 49; Robson, *American Revolution*, p. 146; William B Willcox, 'The British Road to Yorktown: A Study in Divided Command', *The American Historical Review*, 52, No. 1 (October 1946), pp. 26-7, 34; idem, 'British Contributions to American Independence', *The Key Reporter*, 42, No. 1 (Autumn 1976); Higginbotham, *The War*, p. 383.

<sup>41</sup> CP, vol. VI, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

active, they will not get a sight of the Capes of Virginia before the end of this month and then it will be too late. They do not seem to be hearty in the business or to think that the saving that army is an object of such material consequence.'<sup>43</sup>

Cornwallis has at times been criticised for abandoning his outer line of defence, for not breaking out immediately on the arrival of the French fleet, or for leaving too late his attempt to do so.<sup>44</sup> I refute such charges and explain why in my opinion his conduct was unexceptionable — in fact perfectly understandable in the circumstances.<sup>45</sup>

It remains for me here to add briefly to my comments about Washington. 'Like all great commanders,' says Robson, 'he was aided by sheer good fortune.' I go one step further and suggest that, for the reasons I advance, he was a general who was not just lucky in the Yorktown campaign but extraordinarily so.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Allen French (ed.), *Diary of Frederick Mackenzie* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), vol. II, pp. 653, 664.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Johnston, *Yorktown Campaign*, pp. 120-21; Willcox, 'The British Road to Yorktown', pp. 26-7; Robson, *American Revolution*, p. 141; Higginbotham, *The War*, p. 381; and William Seymour, *The Price of Folly: British Blunders in the War of American Independence* (London: Brassey's (UK) Ltd, 1995), pp. 227-28.

<sup>45</sup> CP, vol. VI, pp. 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> Robson, *American Revolution*, p. 172; for my overall conclusions about Yorktown see CP, vol. VI, pp. 5-7.

## *Re-evaluations of certain British or British American actors*<sup>47</sup>

### *Sir Henry Clinton*

Much has been written about Clinton's character, whether, for example, by Willcox, Willcox and Wyatt, or more recently O'Shaughnessy, but none in so many words draws the fundamental conclusion that I do.<sup>48</sup> For instance Willcox and Wyatt, who in their psychological exploration of Clinton's character dwell equally on the problems of a diagnostic approach based on limited historical evidence, conclude that the paradoxes of his conduct can largely be explained by the assumption that he suffered from a conflict, unresolved since childhood, between craving and dreading to exercise authority. 'The central point is that Clinton, although greedy for authority, was afraid of exercising it because it represented an area, the paternal, where a part of himself insisted he did not belong... This conflict affected both

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<sup>47</sup> My commentary in the CP contains a wealth of matter on numerous actors who took part on both sides in the southern campaigns, matter which, due to the prescribed length of this essay, there is — apart from the few principal exceptions below — no opportunity to amplify. Partly relying on the CP or on unpublished papers elsewhere, partly containing my conclusions, or partly collated from scattered sources, other examples are set out in vol. I, p. 22, note 25; p. 55, note 22; p. 91, note 36; pp. 131-32, note 17; p. 145, note 47; p. 152 and pp. 258-59, notes 26 and 27; pp. 196-97, note 15; p. 219, note 49; p. 220, note 50; p. 245, note 12; p. 252, note 17; and p. 264, note 39; vol. II, p. 64, note 6; p. 75, note 27; p. 92, note 64; p. 171, note 9; and p. 189, note 27; vol. III, p. 75, note 27; p. 77, note 31; p. 97, notes 63 and 64; p. 270, notes 9 and 10; p. 312, note 7; p. 323, note 22; and p. 414, note 20; vol. IV, p. 53, note 39; vol. V, p. 221, note 26; p. 264, note 72; and p. 315, note 46; and vol. VI, p. 64, note 6; p. 101, note 3; and p. 175, note 21. Examples identifying previously unidentified individuals are set out in vol. I, p. 144, note 44; and p. 352, note 23; vol. II, p. 84, note 46; p. 99, note 78; p. 117, note 19; p. 135, note 150; and p. 145, note 11; vol. III, p. 312, note 7; p. 331, note 32; p. 356, note 69; p. 385, note 9; and p. 404, note 8; vol. IV, p. 39, note 18; p. 53, note 39; and pp. 159-84, *passim*; vol. V, p. 173, note 29; p. 198, note 73; and p. 221, note 27; and vol. VI, p. 33, note 57; p. 271, note 104; and p. 289, note 121. There are 2,882 notes in the CP, many of which contain my original contributions to history.

<sup>48</sup> Willcox (ed.), *American Rebellion*, pp. ix-li; William B Willcox and Frederick Wyatt, 'Sir Henry Clinton: A Psychological Exploration in History', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 16, No. 1 (January 1959), pp. 3-26; Willcox, *Portrait*, ch. XII; William B Willcox, 'Sir Henry Clinton: Paralysis of Command', in Billias (ed.), *Washington's Generals and Opponents*, pp. 73-102; O'Shaughnessy, "'The Scapegoat': Sir Henry Clinton", in his *The Men Who Lost America*, p. 214.

phases of his American career. When he was intent on telling his superiors what to do, he obviously craved power... As commander in chief, responsible only to the distant ministers of the Crown, he was hesitant and unhappy about using his power; his attitude suggests an unconscious conviction that he ought not to have it.<sup>49</sup>

I on the other hand come to what appears to me a simpler, more commonplace conclusion that Clinton exhibited the classic signs of someone suffering from a marked sense of inadequacy, a conclusion that implicitly reflects on his entire conduct during the war.<sup>50</sup> No such link is explicitly drawn in any of Willcox's cited works. As to the principal signs exhibited by Clinton, he, as a subordinate, was overassertive, overcritical, and overly resentful when his advice was rejected; he, as Commander-in-Chief, was prickly, belittling of his colleagues, and quick to assume they were incompetent; he stored up perceived grievances aplenty; and typically, when associated with his other traits, he was shy, diffident, and did not mingle easily.

### *Banastre Tarleton*

The *bête noir* of the southern campaigns, Tarleton has received an almost uniformly bad press, being castigated for severity in a tide of vilification that began during the Revolution and, with a few notable exceptions mentioned below, continues to the present day. Yet underlying his actions, as I seek to maintain, was 'a defensible approach to the war which has received scant attention, particularly from American writers, who have superficially and uncritically followed revolutionary propaganda in demonising the man.' In a nutshell, and for the reasons I set out in

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<sup>49</sup> Willcox and Wyatt, 'Sir Henry Clinton', pp. 12, 17-19.

<sup>50</sup> CP, vol. I, p. 6.

the CP, he like the revolutionaries had, in a politically polarised situation, 'an intuitive conviction that a winning policy had no option but to rely primarily on deterrence. Indeed, as he saw it, the greater the deterrence, the sooner the restoration of peace and good government under the Crown.'<sup>51</sup>

My reappraisal of Tarleton is in part a contribution to an ongoing academic debate about him that began with the publication of two works by Scotti and Piecuch in 2007 and 2010. Scotti maintains that 'there is no real quantitative or qualitative evidence that suggests his men committed more depredations than anyone else in the Revolutionary War.' He later goes on, 'In the process [*of mythologising the man, as continued by modern historians,*] Americans have divorced themselves from the reality, which is that Banastre Tarleton is no more guilty or innocent of wanton devastation than anyone else who participated in that struggle.' As regards Piecuch, he questions whether Tarleton and his men were ever guilty of a deliberate massacre at the Waxhaws, a matter which I have already addressed.<sup>52</sup>

Among those eminent British historians who have written about the Revolution since World War II, Mackesy, Robson and Wright have made no criticism of Tarleton. Indeed Wright remarks, 'Of the British tactical commanders, there were two... who were both clever and positive, now deeply buried though they are in the seventh circle of execration in America: Arnold and Tarleton.' He later continues, 'Whatever his relationship with Mary (Perdita) Robinson, who helped him write his book on the war as well as his parliamentary speeches, and whom, true to his lights, he deserted, Tarleton showed an energy and capacity all too rare

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<sup>51</sup> For my complete re-evaluation see *ibid.*, pp. 154-57.

<sup>52</sup> Anthony J Scotti Jr, *Brutal Virtue: The Myth and Reality of Banastre Tarleton* (Westminster MD: Heritage Books, 2007), pp. 135 and 137; Piecuch, *Tarleton and the Myth*, pp. 27-40; see, *supra*, pp. 17-8.

among the British commanders. To Rochambeau, however, as to all Americans, he was "a butcher and a barbarian".<sup>53</sup>

### *Nisbet Balfour*

Balfour, the Commandant of Charlestown, fared for many years little better than Tarleton in the eyes of American historians.

Ramsay, a member of the South Carolina revolutionary legislature, set the tone for American writing about the military history of the war for well over a century. Despite stating that he had endeavoured 'to write impartially for the good of mankind', he has provided a rather unbalanced version of events not entirely free from partisan vituperation, as may be seen from his unflattering opinion of Balfour, which I quote. Others, for example Lee, Lossing and McCrady, have followed suit with equally damning remarks. I also quote Moultrie, the Continental general in charge of the revolutionary prisoners at Charlestown.<sup>54</sup>

'Fortunately for Balfour,' so I say, 'the passage of time has led to a less emotive and more balanced assessment of his conduct.' For example, McCowen asserts that 'little can be found to substantiate the accusations of Moultrie and Ramsay', to which I refer. He continues, 'As British commandant, Balfour was understandably unyielding toward the revolutionaries. He scrupulously carried out the commands of his superiors in regard to policies in Charleston and wisely deferred to the Board

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<sup>53</sup> Wright, *Fabric of Freedom*, p. 117.

<sup>54</sup> Ramsay, *The Revolution of South-Carolina*, ii, pp. 263-64; Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (revised edition, New York, 1869), p. 462; Benson J Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, 2 vols (New York, 1855), ii, p. 568n; McCrady, *History*, i, p. 715; William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (New York, 1802), p. 300.



of Police in civil matters. Thus there would seem to be little reason to regard Balfour as the villain of the British occupation of Charleston. Perhaps Moultrie and Ramsay were too personally involved in the events of the time to evaluate objectively the effectiveness of the British officer whose personality they found overbearing.<sup>55</sup>

By contrast my own assessment provides a more rounded portrayal of Balfour and the exercise of his functions than is found elsewhere. I begin by making the perhaps self-evident but often unacknowledged point that he was faced with the realities of power, by which I mean first and foremost that he was no free agent but a servant of the Crown whose duty was to suppress the rebellion. I draw the inescapable conclusions. I then explain why he may have been rather short with incorrigible revolutionaries before noting his immense contribution to the war effort in the Carolinas and his qualities as an officer. All in all, Balfour comes out of my pen portrait rather well.<sup>56</sup>

### *John Watson Tadwell Watson*

Watson was the Lt colonel commanding a corps of British American light infantry that arrived at Charlestown in mid December 1780. Much has been written, whether by revolutionary participants or later, about his brief service in South Carolina, particularly his fraught expedition to the east and his encounters with Marion, but how he came to be serving there instead of taking part in the winter

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<sup>55</sup> George Smith McCowen Jr, *The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-82* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 144-45.

<sup>56</sup> CP, vol. I, pp. 35-7.

campaign, what was his character as a Guards officer, and why he failed to reinforce Rawdon before the Battle of Hobkirk's Hill have remained a mystery.<sup>57</sup>

Drawing on the CP, I have provided answers — or partial ones — to those questions.<sup>58</sup> As to his character, I conclude that he was typical of many a Guards officer down the years, seemingly puffed up with self-importance and reluctant to obey or co-operate with ranking officers such as Rawdon, Balfour and Tarleton whom he considered his professional inferiors. It was for this reason that Cornwallis decided not to take him and his men on the winter campaign because there would have been a constant difficulty of command between him and Tarleton. As regards his failure to reinforce Rawdon, he may have disobeyed orders, they may have miscarried, or he may have been unavoidably delayed by Balfour's stopping him to cover the ferries for Cornwallis's possible return from Wilmington.

### *Alexander Stewart and Paston Gould*

Stewart, Lt Colonel of the 3rd Regiment (the Buffs), assumed command of the troops on the frontier of South Carolina on 16 July 1781 and went on to lead them bravely in the Battle of Eutaw Springs on 8 September. The basics of his service in

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<sup>57</sup> See, for example, James, *Marion*, *passim*; William Johnson, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Major General of the Armies of the United States*, (Charleston, 1822), ii, pp. 68, 71-2, 104-05; Robert W Gibbes (ed.), *Documentary History of the American Revolution consisting of Letters and Papers relating to the Contest for Liberty, chiefly in South Carolina*, (Columbia SC, 1853), iii, *passim*; Lossing, *Field-Book*, ii, pp. 472-75, 479, 500-01, 565-66; David Duncan Wallace, *South Carolina: A Short History, 1520-1948* (reprint of 1951 edition, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), p. 315; Mark Mayo Boatner III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay Co, 1973), p. 1172; Robert D Bass, *Swamp Fox: The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion* (reprint of 1959 edition, Columbia: The Sandler Press Inc, 1976), *passim*; Rankin, *Marion*, *passim*; Showman et al. (eds), *Greene Papers*, *passim*; Buchanan, *Road to Guilford*, pp. 395-96; John W Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), p. 142.

<sup>58</sup> CP, vol. II, pp. 199-200, note 39.

the south have long been known, but until the CP was published, history remained silent about his character. I have filled the gap with an unflattering portrait of him based on the CP. I have also drawn on the light thrown by the CP on his disreputable failure to co-operate in the relief of Ninety Six.<sup>59</sup>

The character of Gould also remained unknown. The titular successor to Rawdon, he was, as I conclude from the CP, a weak man, a previously unrevealed consideration that led Cornwallis to supersede him with Leslie. Blame for not co-operating in the relief of Ninety Six must also be laid at his door.<sup>60</sup>

### *Patrick Ferguson*

A consensus has yet to arise as to Ferguson's character and the exercise of his functions as Inspector of Militia, though the CP goes a long way to supporting my own overall conclusion. Yet, as I relate, unsubstantiated criticism continues to arise — and from surprising quarters. For example Higginbotham, who with Shy has perhaps done most to contribute in recent times to a reassessment of the nature of the war, begins by stating more or less accurately that 'the king's friends in the south favored anything but pacification as that word is currently used. Instead they wanted a course of harsh retribution.' So far so good, but he then mistakenly contends, at least as far as Ferguson is concerned, that 'their views were shared by some of Clinton's subordinates, especially those most exposed to tory opinions such as Banastre Tarleton, Patrick Ferguson, and Lord Rawdon.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> CP, vol. V, p. 295, note 30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 294, note 29.

<sup>61</sup> CP, vol. I, p. 38; Don Higginbotham, 'Reflections on the War of Independence, Modern Guerrilla Warfare, and the War in Vietnam', in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J Albert (eds.), *Arms and*

It is true that Ferguson had vacillated between favouring a scorched-earth and a conciliatory approach to the war, but by 1780 he had come down firmly in support of the latter. Nevertheless, Shy maintains that he remained among the group of 'hotheaded young officers... that advocated the use of fire and sword to defeat the American rebellion.'<sup>62</sup>

Nothing has puzzled historians so much as the circumstances that led Ferguson to occupy King's Mountain instead of pressing ahead to join Cornwallis. 'Why,' asks Lumkin, 'did Patrick Ferguson, a good and experienced soldier, choose a position impossible to defend against rifle-armed opponents using frontier forest tactics? No one knows.' I suggest an answer based at first on Ferguson's reluctance to forego a separate command and his belief that he could defeat his opponents himself, and ultimately, as he realised his hopes of success were doubtful, on his mistaken choice of a defensive position from which he seemingly could not be forced but which proved ideally suited for an onslaught by revolutionary irregulars.<sup>63</sup>

### *Thomas Fraser*

Fraser played an active part in the operations in South Carolina but his background was uncharted. Not until the publication of the CP and my portrayal of him was it established that he was a Scot who had been a lieutenant in the New York

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*Independence: The Military Character of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Ferguson to Clinton, 10 and 15 October 1778, PRO 5/96(177) and (179) (UK National Archives, Kew); Stephen Conway, 'To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 43, No. 3 (July 1986), p. 383; John Shy, 'British Strategy for Pacifying the Southern Colonies, 1778-1781', in Jeffrey J Crow and Larry E Tise (eds), *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 167.

<sup>63</sup> Lumkin, *Savannah to Yorktown*, p. 93; CP, vol. II, pp. 30-1.

Volunteers and had been born in 1755. Nor until then was his service in South Carolina known before his appointment to command the South Carolina Royalist Regiment.<sup>64</sup>

### *George Hanger*

Hanger played a short but important part in the southern campaigns, being major and second in command of Tarleton's British Legion during the summer and autumn of 1780. As such he made a significant contribution to the victory at Camden and commanded the British van on the entry into Charlotte. It is, however, as author of *An Address to the Army*, one of the relatively few commentaries on the southern campaigns by a British participant, that he is best remembered as far as the war is concerned, a contribution that has led in part to my deciding to provide a pen portrait of him. It corrects manifold inaccuracies littering the historical record, for example as to his character and the nature and length of his service in America.<sup>65</sup>

### *James Dunlap*

By no means rosy is the picture of Dunlap emanating from revolutionary sources and followed by American historians to this day, but whether it is accurate is a moot point. For the reasons advanced in my pen portrait of him I suspect not.<sup>66</sup> A captain in the Queen's Rangers on secondment to Ferguson's corps, Dunlap was, as I say, vilified by the revolutionaries for brutality and plundering, but scarce one

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<sup>64</sup> CP, vol. I, p. 243, note 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-9. Having half completed a biography of Hanger, which has been placed on the backburner during the writing of this essay, I dare say there are few, if any, who know more about him than I.

<sup>66</sup> CP, vol I, 74-5, note 5.

concrete example has come to light, which alone is suspicious.<sup>67</sup> Examples of recent American historians who have relied on those revolutionary sources are Waring and Bass. Paraphrasing them, but like them in only general terms, Bass remarks, 'James Dunlap had been vicious and wanton. His plundering, depredations and murders had aroused uncontrollable hatred.'<sup>68</sup>

I have previously observed that there are, despite the passage of years, distinct parallels — yet to be drawn by historians — between the troubles in Northern Ireland and the Revolutionary War in America, not least in the attitudes of the opposing sides.<sup>69</sup> Yes, there were occasional lapses by the security forces in the province, but a disinterested observer may conclude that the opposing party unremittingly depicted the security forces' actions in the worst possible light. So, for the reasons I advance, was it the case with Dunlap.

### *Re-evaluations of certain revolutionary actors*

#### *Thomas Sumter*

While advertng to the internecine warfare waged in the Backcountry of South Carolina, the two standard biographies of Sumter, the brigadier general commanding the revolutionary militia there, gloss over his responsibility for the often barbarous conduct of his men. I do not, although I accept that he was fighting a partisan war. Overall, I assert that he consistently displayed a marked streak of

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<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia*, vol II (Savannah, 1816), p. 352; Johnson, *Life and Correspondence of Greene*, ii, p. 107; Draper, *King's Mountain*, pp. 159, 164.

<sup>68</sup> Waring, *Fighting Elder*, pp. 41, 68; Robert D Bass, *Ninety Six: The Struggle for the South Carolina Back Country* (Columbia: The Sandlapper Press Inc, 1978), p. 349.

<sup>69</sup> See CP, vol. I, back cover.

ruthlessness which did not scruple to employ measures such as cold-blooded murder on a grand scale. Leading me to this necessarily compressed conclusion is a variety of primary sources.<sup>70</sup>

For example, when Sumter captured Orangeburg on 11 May 1781, thirteen of the loyalist prisoners were shot in cold blood. On 23 November 1780 Cornwallis, who had no reason to lie to a subordinate, advised Cruger that Sumter's men 'have been guilty of the most horrid outrages'. Not only was Sumter responsible but also Brandon, Clark and others, who, as Cornwallis explained on 3 December 1780 to Clinton, 'had different corps plundering the houses and putting to death the well affected inhabitants between Tyger River and Pacolet.' Next day he observed to Clinton, 'I will not hurt your Excellency's feelings by attempting to describe the shocking tortures and inhuman murders which are every day committed by the enemy, not only on those who have taken part with us, but on many who refuse to join them... I am very sure that unless some steps are taken [*by the enemy*] to check it, the war in this quarter will become truly savage.' On 7 March 1781, when Rawdon reported to Cornwallis on Sumter's foray down the Congaree and Santee, he remarked generally on 'the savage cruelty of the enemy, who commit the most wanton murders in cold blood upon the friends of Government that fall into their hands'. Turning specifically to Sumter, he related that, while blockading Fort Granby, Sumter 'summoned by proclamation all the inhabitants to join him, offering to all such as would take part with him a full pardon for their former attachment to us and denouncing penalty of death to all who did not range themselves under his standard by the 23rd of February. To give weight to these threats several persons known to be friendly towards us were inhumanly murdered, tho' unarmed and

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<sup>70</sup> Gregorie, *Sumter*, *passim*; Robert D Bass, *Gamecock: The Life and Times of General Thomas Sumter* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), *passim*; CP, vol. I, p. 150.

remaining peaceably at their own houses.'<sup>71</sup> From the examples I have cited it is in my opinion fallacious to believe that Sumter did not condone or approve of the barbarous conduct of his men.

Cornwallis well understood the nature of the creature opposed to him. When Wemyss and his wounded men were captured at Fishdam Ford, Cornwallis immediately assumed that they had been ill treated by Sumter. He was of course mistaken, for Sumter never mistreated captured British or British American troops, but his reaction speaks volumes. Nor could he bring himself to write personally to Sumter about the exchange of John Hutchison, a loyalist prisoner whom it was suspected Sumter was about to hang. Although Cornwallis drafted the letter himself, it was signed by John Money, his aide-de-camp. By contrast he had no compunction about writing to Gates, Greene and Smallwood, who were other revolutionary generals in the south.<sup>72</sup>

### *Andrew Williamson*

Williamson was the brigadier general commanding the revolutionary militia in the Backcountry of South Carolina till shortly after the fall of Charlestown. He then capitulated and ever since his status and role have remained in obscurity. 'There hangs a heavy cloud over Williamson's conduct at this time,' remarks McCrady, but until my pen portrait of him no one had convincingly succeeded in explaining it.<sup>73</sup> Since then an unrevealing article about him has been penned by Toulmin, but prior to the publication of the CP the only biographical information

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<sup>71</sup> 'Levi Smith's Narrative', *The Royal Gazette* (Charlestown), 13-17 April 1782, reprinted in the *Political Magazine* (London), June 1782, p. 378; CP, vol. III, pp. 25, 28, 273, and vol. IV, p. 47.

<sup>72</sup> CP, vol. III, pp. 68, 74, and vol. II, pp. 330-31, 341-42.

<sup>73</sup> McCrady, *History*, i, p. 527; CP, vol. I, p. 77, note 12.



about him was that briefly set out in three biographical dictionaries. None approaches a satisfactory explanation of his behaviour.<sup>74</sup> Otherwise we are left with brief, scattered and unexplained references to his taking protection, which he did not, or — far fewer — to his entering into a parole, which he did. Protection, of course, involved swearing allegiance to the Crown.<sup>75</sup> I, on the other hand, basing my conclusions on the CP, accurately describe his status, together with his duplicitous behaviour and the likely motives for it. I also report a further instance of his duplicity: his acting as a spy for Greene.<sup>76</sup>

### *Andrew Pickens*

Colonel of the Long Cane revolutionary militia, Pickens was granted a parole after the fall of Charlestown and remained peaceably at home till the close of 1780. He then proceeded to break his parole, went off with a band of his men to take part in the Battle of Cowpens, and for his part in the victory was promoted to brigadier general of militia by the ousted revolutionary governor, John Rutledge.

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<sup>74</sup> Toulmin, 'Backcountry Warrior'; *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. 23, pp. 521-22; *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Scribner's, 1936), vol. X, pp. 296-97; N Louise Bailey and Elizabeth I Cooper, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), vol. III, pp. 769-71.

<sup>75</sup> Among those asserting or strongly implying that he took protection are Alden, *The South in the Revolution*, pp. 242, 272; Bass, *Gamecock*, p. 207; Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, p. 1210; Draper, *King's Mountain*, pp. 47, 72; Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary*, p. 151; Gordon, *South Carolina and the Revolution*, p. 104; Lossing, *Field-Book*, ii, p. 506n; Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 210, 274; Toulmin, 'Backcountry Warrior', p. 40; and Wallace, *South Carolina*, p. 297. Among those maintaining that he entered into a parole are Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict that Turned the Tide of the American Revolution* (New York: Perennial, 2003), p. 139; Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 160-61; Lumkin, *Savannah to Yorktown*, pp. 1, 248; Pancake, *This Destructive War*, pp. 80-1; and Wilson, *Southern Strategy*, p. 262.

<sup>76</sup> William Johnson, *Life and Correspondence of Greene*, ii, p. 386; Joseph Johnson, *Traditions*, pp. 144-45.

Relying on McCall, as does Waring, American writers have consistently maintained that Pickens was a man of honour who quite reasonably considered himself released from his parole as a result of being plundered by James Dunlap, a British American officer (see, *supra*, page 35-6). It is not a version of events supported by the CP. Based on evidence there, I conclude that it was most likely a fabrication and leave the reader to form his or her own view of Pickens' breaking his word, though in such a way as to imply my own assessment of his conduct.<sup>77</sup>

Waring's remains the most authoritative biography of Pickens, who had been the subject of three others prior to the publication of the CP. Since then one by Reynolds, a direct descendent of Pickens' brother Joseph, has appeared. An academically flawed work, it materially lacks balance and is not averse to a cavalier treatment of primary sources, ascribing, for example — without corroboration, a letter written by one officer to being written by another and changing the date.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Benjamin Cleveland***

The picture that has come down to us of Cleveland, Colonel of the Wilkes County NC revolutionary militia, is very much as painted by Draper, who maintains that he was quite justifiably 'the terror of terrors' to all Tories but to all others 'the jolly "Old Roundabout" of the Yadkin', a sobriquet derived from the name of his plantation. Examples of a succession of American writers who have followed suit

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<sup>77</sup> McCall, *History*, ii, p. 352; Waring, *Fighting Elder*, pp. 41-2; CP, vol. I, pp. 74-5 and 79, notes 5 and 15.

<sup>78</sup> Cecil B Hartley, *Heroes and Patriots of the South: comprising lives of General Francis Marion, General William Moultrie, General Andrew Pickens, and Governor John Rutledge* (Philadelphia, 1860); Andrew Lee Pickens, *Skyagunsta: the border wizard owl, Major-General Andrew Pickens (1739-1817)* (Greenville SC, Observer Printing Co, 1934); William Hayne Mills, *The Life of General Andrew Pickens* (Clemson SC, 1958); William R Reynolds, *Andrew Pickens: South Carolina Patriot in the Revolutionary War* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Co Inc, 2012) .

are Landrum, Crouch, Ashe, Hickerson and Russell. I myself on the other hand, based on evidence that Draper himself provides, supplemented by Ferguson's own comments, suggest that his barbarous conduct was far too excessive and betrayed in him a marked streak of sadism.<sup>79</sup>

### *Thomas Polk*

Having previously served as Colonel of the 4th North Carolina Continental Regiment, Polk went on to become the commissary in charge of supplying both the North Carolina and southern Continental forces in 1780. While otherwise relating well known facts about him, my biographical note treads new ground by drawing on the CP to suggest that he may have had in mind becoming a traitor to the revolutionary cause.<sup>80</sup> Although Polk is described in the *Dictionary of American Biography* as 'a zealous patriot', other works have pointed out that Gates considered his conduct suspicious at this time, but no concrete evidence has been forthcoming, and certainly none as damning as that set out in the CP.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Draper, *King's Mountain*, pp. 425-54; J B O Landrum, *Colonial and Revolutionary History of Upper South Carolina* (Greenville SC, 1897), pp. 224-29; John Crouch, *Historical Sketches of Wilkes County* (Wilkesboro NC, 1902), pp. 11-35; Samuel A'Court Ashe, *Biographical History of North Carolina from colonial times to the present* (Greensboro NC, 1906), vol V, pp. 69-73; Thomas Felix Hickerson, *Happy Valley, History and Genealogy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), pp. 7-9; David Lee Russell, *The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Co Inc, 2000), p. 189; CP, vol. II, pp. 33, 135, note 152, and 162.

<sup>80</sup> CP, vol. II, p. 115, note 115.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Lossing, *Field-Book*, p. 418; John Hill Wheeler, *Reminiscences and Memoirs of North Carolina and Eminent North Carolinians* (reprint, Baltimore MD: Genealogical Publishing Co, 1966), p. 282; Robinson, *Davie*, p. 96; Showman et al. (eds), *Greene Papers*, vi, p. 559n.

### *How historians have made use of the CP to date*

As I have previously explained, the CP was not widely publicised and took some time to become broadly disseminated among historians. It was not until 2012 that works relying in part on it began to be published. This being so, we still await a detailed and comprehensive history of the southern campaigns as re-evaluated in the light of the CP, and perhaps it is premature to expect that one should have surfaced by now. Instead, we have monographs, biographies and articles making use of it, including in some instances my commentary, and I have cited examples. Sherman, for instance, voluminously makes use of both, but almost entirely in cross-references, setting out in his introduction the reason for this approach: "So much information does [Saberton's] six-volume work contain that it was frankly impossible under the circumstances to have incorporated in our own as much of it as we would have liked."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Sherman, *Calendar*, p. 13.

## PART 3

### Was the war in the south winnable by the British?<sup>83</sup>

As I seek to demonstrate in this Part, Britain's grand strategy for reducing the southern colonies was at least in part sound and it may well have achieved a lasting measure of success if only Clinton and Cornwallis had played their cards right.<sup>84</sup> How and why it went wrong are the questions that I shall first address.

The cardinal sins were initially to underestimate to a gross extent the number of troops needed for prosecuting the campaigns, to misjudge the continued pacification of conquered territory, to omit taking into account the likely nature of the war should pacification not succeed, and to fail to improvise tactics accordingly — all contrary to Clausewitz's first rule of war<sup>85</sup>.

Of the number of troops left with Cornwallis — on which historians widely diverge — Mackesy provides a convincing account that 6,753 effectives remained in South Carolina and 1,706 in Georgia, of whom 4,870 and 1,259 were respectively fit for duty.<sup>86</sup> The upshot was that while posts at Camden, Cheraw Hill, the village of Ninety Six and Augusta were established, there were, apart from the troops at

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<sup>83</sup> I shall in due course develop my answer to this question in either a book or an extended article, but the prescribed length of this essay necessarily entails my adopting a skeletal approach here.

<sup>84</sup> See CP, vol. I, pp. 3-4.

<sup>85</sup> 'The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish... the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive,' Claus von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited by Beatrice Hauser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> Mackesy, *The War for America*, p. 346, quoting CO 5/100(53) (Kew: UK National Archives). In South Carolina Cornwallis took 2,500 men to Camden, and Balfour some 600 to Ninety Six, leaving three British and three Hessian regiments to occupy Charlestown. In Georgia were Allen's, Brown's, Cruger's and Wright's British American corps, together with von Porbeck's Hessian.

Camden, precious few to control the vast hinterlands given the need to maintain the posts themselves. So the opportunity was there, which the revolutionaries seized, to regroup unopposed and to commence what became the insurgency. Far better to suppress it before it developed, but there were too few troops to do so.<sup>87</sup>

As far as pacification is concerned, experience soon proved that in a politically polarised situation lenity was not the answer. Short of admitting failure, the only solution was to adopt a policy of deterrence, but none was in the main adopted by Cornwallis and in any event, to be effective, it would have had to depend on an adequate number of troops to back it up.<sup>88</sup>

Then there were the loyalists, who according to Robert Gray, a most percipient commentator, constituted 50 per cent of the Backcountry population. Over the past five years they had been brutally repressed by the revolutionary authorities and demanded retribution. By not providing it — except to exile certain

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<sup>87</sup> As General Samuel B Griffith has observed, 'Historical experience suggests that there is very little hope of destroying a revolutionary guerrilla movement after it has survived the first phase [*organisation and consolidation*] and has acquired the sympathetic support of a significant segment of the population. The size of this "significant segment" will vary; a decisive figure might range from 15 to 25 per cent,' Introduction to Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc, 1961), p. 27. As for controlling a population of some 83,000 in South Carolina's Backcountry, the shortage of troops was in fact risible. In the east some 800 men of the 71st (Highland) Regiment occupied Cheraw Hill, but were soon decimated by illness and disease. It was not long before they were withdrawn. In the west Cruger soon superseded Balfour in command of the District of Ninety Six, but reported that his and Allen's corps amounted to no more than near 300 men fit for duty. In Georgia Augusta was shortly to be occupied by Brown's corps of 250 men alone, leaving the vast swathe of territory between there and Savannah totally bereft of troops. Admittedly, part of the shortfall in Ninety Six was for a time countered by the formation of the royal militia, but it was too late and in any event it was inadequate to control large expanses of territory there.

<sup>88</sup> For examples of lenity see the CP, vol. I, pp. 155-56, vol. II, pp. 5 and 20, and vol. III, pp. 287, 402 and 407-08. I discuss later the deterrent measures available to Cornwallis..

deposed officers and officials to the sea islands for other reasons — the British alienated their friends without winning over their enemies.<sup>89</sup>

As respects the likely nature of the war should pacification not succeed, the British had a wealth of experience in meeting with aroused irregular opposition, for example at Concord and Lexington, and not least in the comprehensive defeat of Burgoyne. Wherever the British campaigned, it had become a fact of life. This being so, it was naive to assume that it would not break out in the south and to fail to plan ahead. In the plains and open woodlands there, the key to defeating irregulars was mounted troops, as Hanger himself explained, but the only ones Cornwallis was left with were the British Legion and a detachment of the 17th Light Dragoons. Their numbers were totally inadequate for such a job.<sup>90</sup> As Robson succinctly put it, 'The British, hidebound by their European background, never improvised sufficiently.'<sup>91</sup> Without improvisation and adaptation to American conditions they were in no position to succeed.

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<sup>89</sup> It is, I think, unnecessary for me to expatiate on deterrence except to assert a perhaps self-evident and simple fact, namely that a principal purpose is to deter by threat or way of punishment actions or omissions of a particularly injurious nature. As to retributive justice, it embraces in its classical form the idea that the amount of punishment should be proportionate to the amount of harm caused by criminally offensive behaviour. Despite criticism in recent years the concept remains a central pillar of the criminal law — even today, and it is perhaps right that it should be so, for, if individuals begin to believe that society is unwilling or unable to impose penalties commensurate with injurious acts, then seeds of anarchy and vigilante justice are sown. Indeed, it was the lack of retributive justice that impelled many loyalists to seek vengeance on their enemies, thereby adding to the disorder in the Backcountry. As to loyalism there, see Gray, 'Observations', pp. 140, 148.

<sup>90</sup> "The crackers and militia in those parts of America are all mounted on horseback, which renders it totally impossible to force them to an engagement with infantry *only*. When they chuse to fight, they dismount and fasten their horses to the fences and rails; but if not very confident in the superiority of their numbers, they remain on horseback, give their fire, and retreat, which renders it useless to attack them without cavalry, for though you repulse them and drive them from the field, you can never improve the advantage or do them any material detriment," Hanger, *An Address*, p. 82. See also CP, vol. II, p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> Robson, *American Revolution*, p. 99.

And so, as 1780 progressed, a combination of the above factors led the British to control neither the entire eastern part of South Carolina by the close of the summer nor, with the defeat of Ferguson, almost the whole of the Backcountry by the close of the year.

Finally, when reviewing what went wrong, we need to take into account Cornwallis's precipitate invasions of North Carolina without first consolidating control of South Carolina and Georgia in line with Clinton's instructions, matters extensively addressed in my commentary<sup>92</sup>; his continuance of the second invasion after the defeat at Cowpens<sup>93</sup>; and his absurd decision at Wilmington to forsake the provinces to the south and march into Virginia, another matter that my commentary extensively addresses<sup>94</sup>. Yet, as I shall now explain, the British might have achieved a lasting measure of success, notwithstanding the limited number of troops available in North America.

Admittedly, Clinton was naturally concerned about the arrival of the French expeditionary force and the threat posed to New York, but wars are won, not by cautious, hesitant commanders, but by those who are prepared to take risks. Instead of taking some 4,500 troops with him to New York, he should have left them with Cornwallis in keeping with the primacy of the southern strategy. Well garrisoned with some 15,500 effectives, of whom some 10,000 were fit for duty, New York

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<sup>92</sup> See, for example, CP, vol. II, pp. 32-3.

<sup>93</sup> By destroying his extensive train of baggage and provisions he was perforce unable, unless resupplied, to remain in the back parts of North Carolina, a prerequisite if the loyalists were to embody. It almost beggars belief that, with the North Carolinians in Hamilton's corps available to advise, his intelligence was so poor as not to indicate that the only means of resupply, by water from Wilmington to Cross Creek, was impractical.

<sup>94</sup> CP, vol. IV, pp. 101-03.



should have been able to hold out if attacked, and in any event till reinforced from the south.

With such an accretion of force Cornwallis would — perhaps at once, as seems inevitable — have assigned it to the Backcountry, maybe half to Ninety Six and half to the east of South Carolina, thereby providing badly needed support for the royal militia and deterring the revolutionary irregulars from regrouping. Of particular value would have been the Queen's Rangers, though, for the reasons I have described, a wise decision would have been to supplement them, the British Legion, and the detachment of the 17th with mounted troops formed from the infantry. Such an arrangement would have made it unnecessary to call up Cruger's and Allen's corps from Georgia, leaving the troops there to police the interior and perhaps add — marginally — to Brown's at Augusta, where, among other things, they would have provided more support for Grierson's regiment of royal militia.

A sufficiency of troops to police both provinces was, however, only part of the equation. If pacification was to be maintained or ultimately succeed, those of the revolutionary persuasion had to be convinced that the consequences of taking up arms were greater than the alternative of remaining peaceably at home, where they would have to supply only a measure of provisions in lieu of their enrolment in the royal militia. So, apart from allowing them to occupy their property peaceably, pacification ultimately depended on deterrence, first on effectively suppressing outbreaks of resistance, using if necessary the kind of tactics I have outlined, and second on imposing severe sanctions for either taking up arms or breaking paroles or oaths of allegiance — but deterrence would work only if there were sufficient troops to ensure that most transgressors were caught and punished. Of course, whenever a nascent insurgency may develop, there is always a fine line to be drawn

between obtaining the desired effect with deterrent measures and going too far with them, thereby provoking the outcome that they were meant to forestall. Yet, all in all, the option of effective deterrence had to be tried here, for there was no other besides lenity, which, as matters soon proved, stood no chance of success. As Robson aptly remarked of British strategy throughout the war, 'The results of following the conciliatory point of view were generally disastrous.'<sup>95</sup>

As to the severe sanctions available to the British, they were in fact few, and not long-term imprisonment, for the facilities were not there, the Provost in Charlestown being overflowing. In Georgia the position was even worse. In the case of those who revolted against the reinstatement of the King's peace, but were not subject to paroles or oaths of allegiance, there was a measure available that has had a long pedigree. It was adopted by Wemyss, as sanctioned by Cornwallis, when he burned the plantations of those to the east who had taken up arms. I say 'a long pedigree' advisedly, for the destruction of homes in like circumstances was, for example, sanctioned by the British in Palestine, where the legislation was kept on the Statute Book by the State of Israel, which controversially uses it to the present day. Made under article 6 of the Palestine (Defence) Order in Council 1937, regulation 119(1) of the Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945 says: 'A military commander may by order direct the forfeiture to the Government of Palestine of any house, structure or land from which he has reason to suspect that any firearm has been illegally discharged, or any bomb, grenade or explosive or incendiary article illegally thrown, or of any house, structure or land situated in any area, town, village, quarter or street the inhabitants or some of the inhabitants of which he is satisfied have committed, or attempted to commit, or abetted the commission of, or been

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<sup>95</sup> Robson, *American Revolution*, p. 118.

accessories after the fact of the commission of, any offence against the Regulations involving violence or intimidation or any Military Court offence; and when any house, structure or land is forfeited as aforesaid, the military commander may destroy the house or the structure or anything growing on the land.' As for breaking paroles or oaths of allegiance, the ultimate sanction, on conviction by court martial, was sentence of death. Yet, as we have seen, such sentences were at times commuted by Cornwallis, lessening their deterrent effect (see p. 44, note 88), whereas Germain on the contrary, as evinced by his letter of 9 November, appeared to favour their being generally carried out, seemingly convinced, as he was, of their deterrent value (CP, vol. III, p. 45).

If pacification were to succeed, a firm grip had to be taken by Cornwallis on plundering by his troops, alienating, as it did, his friends and propelling his enemies to take up arms.

Pacification would have taken a much longer period than Cornwallis was prepared to allow. As I have observed elsewhere, "*Festina lente!*" was the maxim for success.<sup>96</sup> If the measures I have outlined had been implemented, there seems a reasonable prospect that South Carolina and Georgia would have been eventually restored to the King's peace in reality as well as in name, perhaps with the reinstatement of South Carolina's constitution as favoured by Germain. Only then should thoughts have turned to pursuing the overall strategy to the northward. How it may have been done, and where the troops may have come from, are questions that I shall now address.

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<sup>96</sup> CP, vol. II, p. 32; see also Mackesy, 'Could the British have won?' p. 19.

It would have been folly to remove troops from South Carolina and Georgia, opening the door to the breaking out of an insurgency there, and none for a time would have been available from New York, assuming Clinton had not taken a material detachment with him when he left the south. The answer would have lain in the troop reinforcements arriving at New York in October 1780 and at Charlestown and New York in June and July 1781, together amounting to 8,500 men. Instead of being frittered away on diversionary expeditions like Arnold's and Phillips' — expeditions that had no effect whatever on the overall strategy of moving northwards from the south, they could have been consolidated for the invasion of North Carolina.

In a convincing memorandum of extraordinary strategic significance, one entirely overlooked by historians, Hector MacAlester explains why the invasion of North Carolina should be mounted, not from the south, which would not solve the problem of maintaining the troops in the back parts, but from the north — from bases in Petersburg and Halifax, which would not only obviate that problem but force the Continental southern army to withdraw lest it be caught in a pincer movement.<sup>97</sup>

As to Virginia, it would remain, at least for the time being, a step too far.<sup>98</sup>

It remains for me to summarise how I envisage the war may have ended. As Clausewitz pertinently put it, 'Not every war need be fought till one side collapses...

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<sup>97</sup> CP, vol. IV, pp. 138-39.

<sup>98</sup> In another compelling plan (CP, vol. VI, pp. 206-08) Hector MacAlester explains how a conquest of Virginia may be put in train. The troops should not of course have come from those invading North Carolina or possessing the provinces to its south, which it would remain a folly to remove, but rather from further reinforcements sent out by Britain — a prospect, perhaps not at present, but certain if peace with France and Spain, which was on the cards, were concluded.

in war many roads lead to success and they do not all involve the opponent's outright defeat,' — the most important of these being to wear the enemy down.<sup>99</sup> With North Carolina conquered, Virginia threatened next, and France and Spain vacillating about a continuance of the war, there was a reasonable prospect that the remaining colonies would have accepted an accommodation short of independence, one giving them all they had sought before hostilities commenced. So, responding to the question posed in the heading of this Part, I conclude — like Mackesy, but for wider reasons — that the answer was 'Yes'.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, pp. 33-7.

<sup>100</sup> As Wright remarks, the reasons for the British failure have remained elusive, a gap that this Part seeks to fill as respects the war in the south (Wright, *Fabric of Freedom*, pp. 107-08). Of reasons advanced by historians too numerous to name, they are to a degree encapsulated by Shy, who refers to the fact that groups of revolutionary irregulars could not be eliminated; loyalists could not therefore be protected, so were less inclined to commit themselves; civilians were roughly treated by Cornwallis's troops, which, together with Clinton's proclamation of 3 June 1780, led dormant revolutionaries to take up arms; and many loyalists, infuriated at the lack of retributive justice, took matters into their own hands (John Shy, 'The American Revolution: The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War', in Stephen G Kurtz and James H Hutson (eds.), *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), p. 142; idem, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 211-13). Other historians consistently refer to plundering by regulars and to the harshness of the pacification policy pursued by Cornwallis, whereas I myself conclude that, apart from plundering, his policy was too lenient. A number, like myself, are of opinion that his troops were spread too thinly but they do not provide the supporting detail that I do. A few refer to the folly of continuing the autumn campaign after Cowpens but hardly any conclude, as I do, that a hold on South Carolina and Georgia could have been maintained if Cornwallis had not marched into Virginia (CP, vol. IV, p. 102). Overall, it has fallen to me to coalesce these disparate strands into a comprehensive critique of what appears to me to have essentially gone wrong.

Besides the above, an original contribution to history is my analysis of the way in which the southern strategy could have been successfully pursued by the British and the war eventually won. Of British historians, Robson and Wright conclude that the war had effectively been lost by the close of 1778, whereas Mackesy takes the view that peace with France and Spain, which was in prospect, would have ultimately led to an end of the war in Britain's favour (Robson, *American Revolution*, p. 114; Wright, *supra*, p. 128; Mackesy, 'Could the British have won?' pp. 23-4, 28). I on the other hand explicitly explain how the end may have come about.

To summarise, publication of the CP, including my commentary and footnotes in it, provides a mass of information on both the southern campaigns and the actors in them, information previously unavailable to, or not easily accessible by, historians and in itself a significant contribution to the field. Yet far more important is that publication has also opened the door, as evinced by my commentary, footnotes and this essay, to material re-evaluations, not only of individual actors and events, but also of the overall conduct of the campaigns and of the strategy and tactics employed. Not only will future historians use the six volumes as primary sources but almost inevitably they will be led to reconceptualise the Revolutionary War in the light of the original contributions to history that I have made.

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